United Nations A/67/760–S/2013/121

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
28 February 2013

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session
Agenda item 36
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Letter dated 27 February 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the Joint Statement of the first session of the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum, held in Moscow on 20 February 2013 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter and the enclosed Joint Statement as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 27 February 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

Joint Statement of the first session of the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum

20 February 2013

The first session of the Arab-Russian Cooperation Forum on the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs was held on 20 February 2013 in Moscow.

The meeting was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (the host country), H.E. Dr. Adnan Mansour, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of the Republic of Lebanon (presidency of the League of Arab States Ministerial Council), and H.E. Dr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS). The League of Arab States was also represented by (the Forum mechanism) H.E. Nasser Al-Muzayyan, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait in Moscow (preceding presidency of the LAS Ministerial Council), H.E. Mr. Mohamed Kamel Amr, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt (next presidency of the LAS Ministerial Council), and H.E. Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq (presidency of the current Arab summit).

The most critical international issues and some major aspects of the current situation in the Middle East of mutual concern were discussed by the Ministers during the Forum. Deliberations took place in an atmosphere of openness and common will to achieve further development and strengthening of mutual cooperation between the Russian Federation and the member States of the League of Arab States, based on the foundations and principles stated in the Memorandum of Association of the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum signed by the Russian Federation and the League of Arab States. The aim of the Forum is to ensure achieving the goals required to establish a solid and concrete partnership to serve the vital interests of both sides.

Regional and international issues

The Ministers participating in the Forum emphasized their adherence to maintaining international peace and security in accordance with the principles of international law and the central role of the United Nations and its Security Council. They reaffirmed the importance of developing relations between their countries in the spirit of good-neighbourliness and respect of the interests of each country.

The Ministers supported the legitimate aspirations of the people for a better life, broad political, economic and social rights, taking due account of the historical and civilizational particularities of each country and the observance of the universally recognized human rights. They reaffirmed their respect for the principle of State sovereignty and condemned all kinds of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of any State, and called for resolving outstanding issues and crisis situations exclusively through peaceful means.

The Ministers condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, irrespective of its motivations, and underlined that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, culture or ethnic group. They reiterated their determination to enhance cooperation in addressing the threat of global terrorism. They also welcomed the continuation of efforts aimed at strengthening the central role of the United Nations in international counterterrorism cooperation and the establishment of the international centre to fight terrorism under the umbrella of the United Nations in Riyadh.

In the context of discussions on regional security, the participants agreed that the issue of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict is of paramount importance and should not be overshadowed by any other regional development. They reiterated their commitment to finding a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to this conflict using the recognized principles and provisions of the international legal framework, including the Charter of the United Nations, implementation of the Security Council resolutions, especially 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, the Madrid Principles, the road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the concept of land for peace. The Ministers highlighted total rejection of all the unilateral Israeli actions aimed at altering the identity of Jerusalem, changing its geographic and demographic realities, and called upon UNESCO to exert efforts to preserve Islamic and Christian holy sites and secure them from repeated attacks, noting the efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the preservation of these holy sites.

The Ministers strongly condemned Israel's geographical and demographical changes in the occupied Arab territories, and regarded these changes as null and void, and consider them a blatant abuse of international law, international legitimacy, and United Nations resolutions. They also strongly condemned announced plans of the Israeli authorities to expand illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, as the implementation of such plans could jeopardize the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, and called for a halt to all Israeli settlement activities and for the resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli talks on the above-mentioned basis aimed at establishing an independent, sovereign, viable and territorially contiguous Palestinian State on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, achieving a two-State solution with the two States living side by side in peace and security. In this context the Ministers highlighted the role of Russia in the international quartet, stressing the need to increase the Quartet's entrusted role.

The Ministers stressed the importance of putting an end to the Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories, which include Palestinian, Syrian and remaining Lebanese territories. They also called for a settlement of all outstanding final status issues of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (water, security, borders, refugees and Jerusalem). The Ministers welcomed the ceasefire reached between the Gaza authorities and Israel on 21 November 2012 through Egyptian mediation and expressed their appreciation for the efforts made by Egypt in this regard.

The Ministers called for the immediate lifting of the ongoing inhumane blockade on the Gaza Strip and the release of all Palestinian and Arab prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons, and called upon Israel for permanent regular release of all financial dues to the Palestinian Authority. The Ministers welcomed the General Assembly resolution granting to Palestine non-member Observer State status in the

United Nations as a step towards obtaining full membership. They welcomed Russia's willingness to host an international conference on the Middle East in Moscow upon agreement with all concerned parties. The Ministers expressed their strong support for all efforts aiming at achieving Palestinian national reconciliation, including meetings between the Palestinian factions in Cairo.

The Ministers expressed their deep concern regarding the critical situation the Syrian crisis has reached, resulting in thousands of victims and increasing numbers of displaced people and refugees both inside and outside Syria in addition to the vast destruction of the infrastructure and vital Syrian institutions, and the implications of this for the neighbouring countries, regional security and stability. They strongly condemned the continuation of bloodshed, its escalation and violations of human rights. They called upon all the parties concerned to exert necessary and urgent efforts in order to reach an immediate ceasefire, and stressed the need to adopt an appropriate approach regarding the deteriorating human situation in Syria and the urgent need to deliver humanitarian aid to the affected Syrian civilians, in addition to ensuring that this aid reaches increasing numbers of displaced people and refugees both inside and outside Syria. The Ministers commended the positive results of the international conference of donors for supporting the humanitarian situation in Syria hosted by the State of Kuwait on 30 January 2013. They also commended the Russian humanitarian assistance being granted to the Syrian people affected by the events in addition to all the assistance given by the Arab and other countries and international organizations to reduce the humanitarian implications for the Syrian people.

The Ministers reaffirmed their total respect for Syrian sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity and their rejection of any foreign intervention. They stressed the need to continue working and exerting joint efforts to halt the bloodshed of the Syrian people and to resolve the crisis on a political basis through encouraging all the Syrians to begin the dialogue process in accordance with the final communiqué issued in Geneva on 30 June 2012. This is to be achieved through a political process that will lead to forming a transitional governing body with full executive powers to steer the transitional period and transfer power within an agreed time framework, with the aim of recovering a normal life, security, stability and achieving freedom, democracy, political reform, social justice and human dignity.

The Ministers reaffirmed their ongoing support to the efforts of H.E. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, aiming at reaching a peaceful solution for the Syrian crisis.

The Ministers stressed the need to exert all efforts to transform the Middle East into a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. They stressed the importance of implementing the outcomes of the final document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in particular implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. They reaffirmed the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards and the urgency of achieving universality of the Treaty. The Ministers also urged all States in the region to take relevant steps to contribute to the realization of the objectives of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and called upon all States to refrain from taking any measures that preclude the

achievement of this objective. In this regard they expressed deep concern over national statements of some organizers calling for the delay of the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and confirmed their adherence to a serious and constructive approach to the goal of convening the conference in April 2013 at the latest, and noted their expectations that other relevant States would adopt the same approach to participate in the conference.

The Ministers agreed to exert their joint efforts to organize a conference in accordance with the mandate and framework agreed upon at the 2010 Review Conference.

The Ministers expressed their concern over the lack of progress in resolving the issue of Iran's nuclear programme and called upon Iran to take constructive steps towards restoring the confidence of the international community in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. They also reaffirmed that every State has the inalienable right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in accordance with its rights and obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Ministers commended the efforts made by the new leaders of Yemen to implement the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council on the peaceful transfer of power, which was signed in Riyadh on 23 November 2011. They welcomed the work being carried out to facilitate the launch of the process of national dialogue in the country, reorganize the armed forces, overcome the severe humanitarian crisis and eradicate terrorism and extremism. It was stressed that the States guarantors of the agreements signed in Riyadh should take further effective steps to promote these primary objectives.

The Ministers welcomed the ongoing political process in Libya and the efforts made by the Libyans to restore a normal internal political climate and to establish new institutions on the basis of the principles of the rule of law, freedom and equality widely supported by all people. In this regard, they reaffirmed the importance of accelerated rehabilitation of the national armed forces and law enforcement agencies in Libya with a view to ensuring security and stability in the country, as well as strengthening its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Ministers confirmed their support for a peaceful resolution between Iran and the United Arab Emirates over the three islands of Abu Musa, the Lesser Tunb and the Greater Tunb in accordance with international law and in particular the Charter of the United Nations and through direct negotiations between the parties.

The Ministers welcomed the signing of security and economic agreements between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, and stressed the critical importance of their practical implementation in full as a key step towards a stable and prosperous future for both nations and the need for continued hard work to help the two States to reach a solution to outstanding issues between them, including the Abyei Area. The Ministers praised international efforts strongly supported by the League of Arab States, the African Union, and the United Nations in reaching the Darfur Peace Agreement and highlighted the role of UNAMID, and called upon the factions that had not yet signed the Doha Peace Document to do so, commending the outstanding role of the State of Qatar.

The Ministers welcomed the end of the transitional period in Somalia, expressing their appreciation for the progress achieved by the leaders and people of Somalia towards bringing an end to the transition. They renewed their commitment to help the

Somali Government to face different economic challenges and complete the ongoing national reconciliation efforts, stressing the importance of the unity, independence and territorial integrity of Somalia. The Ministers stressed the urgent need to encourage mutual understanding and respect among people of different religious and cultural identities, and the importance of regional and international initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions. They confirmed their support to the activities of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and its upcoming Fifth Global Forum which is scheduled to be held in Austria, and they welcomed the initiative of World Interfaith Harmony Week, launched by Jordan and adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations; the establishment of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, which was launched in Vienna on 26 November 2012; and the establishment of the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism in Abu Dhabi on 14 December 2012.

The Ministers called for the adoption of effective measures aimed at the elimination of any form of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or ethnicity. They expressed the view that the concept of equal citizenship should be a basic foundation that constitutes communities' social fabric.

Bilateral cooperation

The Ministers expressed their interest in further coordinating their approaches to important regional and international issues, and underlined the importance of conducting regular meetings of the Joint Senior Officials Committee alternatively in Moscow and Cairo, to consult on issues of common interest and foreign policy.

The Ministers adopted a Joint Action Plan for the period 2013-2015 to implement the principles, goals and objectives of the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum, seeking the development of their relations in accordance with the cooperation agreement and the memorandum of understanding between the two sides. The Joint Senior Officials Committee is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan and submitting regular reports on the progress achieved.

The Ministers welcomed the growing economic cooperation between the Russian Federation and member States of the League of Arab States. They confirmed their interest in realizing a significant potential for bilateral business and investment interaction, including the fields of industry, energy and renewable energy, as well as nuclear energy, transportation, telecommunications, cooperation in different fields such as water, environmental protection, and agriculture, inter alia.

The Ministers emphasized the importance of developing touristic ties between the Russian Federation and the member States of the League of Arab States, stressing the need for further enhancing cooperation among relevant organizations and agencies.

The Ministers expressed their support for developing cultural cooperation, including enhancement of ties between relevant organizations of the Russian Federation and the member States of the League of Arab States, holding festivals, fairs and exhibitions on a reciprocal basis. They stressed the importance of preserving the Russian and the Arab cultural and historical heritage.

The Ministers called for increased educational cooperation, including through enhancement of ties among universities and other higher education establishments, participation in international scientific and cultural meetings to be held in the

Russian Federation and the Arab States. They also noted the importance of the development of scientific and technical cooperation between the two sides, as well as cooperation in the field of space science and technology, including the exchange of experiences, visits, joint scientific research, and technological projects.

The Ministers agreed to hold the forthcoming second session of the Forum in 2014 in one of the Arab capitals.